On Campus with Max Shulman

(By the author of "Rally Round the Flag, Boys!", "Dobie Gillis," etc.)

THERE ARE NO BAD TEACHERS; THERE ARE ONLY BAD STUDENTS

The academic year has only just begun and already one thing is clear: you're not ready for college.

What, then, should you do? Should you throw up your hands and quit? I say no! I say you must attack, grapple, cope! I say America did not become the world's leader in motel construction and kidney transplants by running away from a fight!

To the question then: You say you're not ready for college. You're too green, too naive. You lack maturity.

Okay, the answer is simple: get mature. How? Well sir, to achieve maturity you need two things:

a) a probing mind;

b) a vest.

A probing mind will be quickly yours if you'll remember that education consists not of answers but of questions. Blindly accepting information and dumbly memorizing data is high school stuff. In college you don't just accept. You dispute, you push, you pry, you challenge. If, for instance, your physics prof says, "E equals mc squared," don't just write it down. Say to the prof, "Why?"

This will show him two things:

a) Your mind is a keen, thrusting instrument.

b) You are in the wrong major.

Ask questions, questions, and more questions. That is the essence of maturity, the heart and liver of education. Nothing will more quickly convince the teachers that you are of college calibre. And the tougher your questions, the better. Come to class with queries that dart and flash, that make unexpected sallies into uncharted territory. Ask things which have never been asked before, like "How tall was Nietzsche?" and "Did the Minotaur have ticks? If so, were they immortal?" and "How often did Pitt the Elder shave?"

(Incidentally, you may never know the complete answer to Pitt the Elder's shaving habits, but of one thing you can be positive: no matter how often he shaved and no matter what blades he used, he never enjoyed the shaving comfort that you do. I am assuming, of course, that you use Personna Super Stainless Steel Blades, a logical assumption to make when one is addressing college men—which is to say men of perspicacity, discrimination, wit, taste, cognizance, and shrewdness—for Personna is a blade to please the perspicacious, delight the discriminating, win the witty, tickle the tasteful, coddle the cognizer, and shave the shrewd.

(I bring up Personna Super Stainless Steel Blades because the makers of Personna Super Stainless Steel Blades pay me to write this column, and they are inclined to sulk if I omit to mention their product. I would not like to see them unhappy, the makers of Personna, for they are fine ruddy men, fond of morris dancing and home brewed root beer, and they make a blade that shaves closely and cleanly, nicklessly and hacklessly, and is sharp and gleaming and durable and available both in double-edge style and Injector style.

(And from these same bounteous blademakers comes Burma-Shave, regular or menthol, a lather that outlathers other lathers, brother. So if you'd rather lather better, and soak your whiskers wetter, Burma-Shave's your answer.)

But I digress. We have now solved the problem of maturity. In subsequent columns we'll take up other issues, equally burning. Since 1953 when this column first started running in your campus paper, we've tackled such thorny questions as "Can a student of 19 find happiness with an economics professor of 90?" and "Should capital punishment for pledges be abolished?" and "Are room-mates sanitary?" Be assured that in this, our 14th year, we will not be less bold.

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